A REPLY OF Lewis Sabran OF THE Society of *JESUS*, TO THE ANSWER given to his LETTER Written to a Peer of the Church of *England*, by a Nameless Member of the same.

SIR,

MY Letter to a Peer of the Church of *England*, which you pretend to answer in that which I now receive from you, hath clear'd me sufficiently in the Opinion of all Men of Sense, of the Mistake you charged me with; However, I am willing to cast away half an Hour in minding you more *justly*, and more *Charitably* of your disingenuous Cavils; after which I resolve never to take any notice of such unknown Masks, or Persons who conceal their Names, that their Errors when bass'd, their Calumnies when clear'd, may not put them to the Blush.

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That Part of the Debate betwixt us, which you maintain ſtill, is whether your accuſing me, *of great Ignorance, or notorious Forgery*, for citing a Form of Prayer to the Bleſſed Virgin, as made by St. *Auguſtin*, being taken out of the 35 Sermon *de Sanctis*, printed in the 10th Tome of his Works; And the Proofs you ſupport your Charge with, evince my Guilt; or rather caſt and retort that Blame upon you, and diſcover your inconſiderate itch of Scribling, tho it be but to nible at three Lines of the Introduction of a Sermon, the Diſcourſe whereof, tho it plainly ſets out how unwarantable the Schiſm of your Church was from Catholic Unity, you have prudently thought fit to leave untouch'd.

To make out your Charge againſt me, you offer'd theſe three Proofs.

The First, That the *Title* of that Sermon, *in the Feaſt of the Aſſumption, doth not agree at all to any thing that is near St.* Auguſtins *Time.*

I anſwered that your Meaning muſt be either, That no Feaſt-day of the Bleſſed Virgins Aſſumption was kept in St. *Auguſtin's* Days; or elſe, That nothing was piouſly believ'd or thought of then concerning her Aſſumption: If the *Firſt* meaning was yours, I prov'd that Inſtance to be of *no Force*; becauſe that Titles of a far fresher Date than moſt Sermons of the Holy Fathers bore, have been affixed to them, which were preach'd on the Days of ſuch Myſteries, or Saints Deaths, as were not then kept holy: Of this I produc'd ſeveral Inſtances.

As for the *Second* meaning of thoſe Words, I diſcover'd the Error, of taking thoſe Words, *on the Aſſumption*, in the Senſe they now vulgarly bear, whereas in the Holy Fathers Language, when apply'd to Saints or the Bleſſed Virgin, they only ſignified the Day *of their Death*; of this I brought again many and plain Proofs; next I produced many others, (to which I have more that may be added) to evince that in the Fourth and Fifth Century it was piouſly believ'd, that the Bleſſed Virgin was aſſumed in Body into Heaven, tho it was not look'd upon as a certain Truth, made out from any Text of Scripture, unqueſtionable Tradition from the Apoſtles, or Deciſion of the preſent Church. I conceiv'd this to be ſo full an Anſwer to your firſt Proof, as would have forced any one leſs obſtinate than

than I find you, to have owned it of no value: But let us examin what you reply.

You tell us *First*, That your meaning was to deny any Belief of the Assumption of the B. Virgin to have been in St. *Augustins* Time, nor consequently any Sermon on that Subject, *which this evidently is. Secondly* that if *Day of Assumption* do but *almost ever* signifie the Day of a Saints Death, why may not this be the Exception? *Thirdly*, that it cannot be the meaning of this Title, since the Sermon speaks of *Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, and that it was the Custom of the Church to believe, that the Virgin Mary was on the Day of that Solemnity assumed into Heaven.*

This is all you add to support your first Proof, that is, first a *new Error*, next a *false Inference*, then a *plain Cheat and Contradiction.*

Tis an Error that there was not in St. *Augustins* time a general pious Belief (tho uncertain) of the Blessed Virgins Assumption: I have made it out in my first Letter, by many Proofs, which (as it is usual with such Writers) you have not been pleas'd to take notice of, and I think unnecessary to repeat; If you desire others, you may find them in *Natalis Alexandres* Censure, of the Book ascribed to the Holy Bishop *Meliton.*

'Tis a *false Consequence* to say, *Assumption* doth not always signifie the *Death* of a Saint, therefore here it *may* signifie the Corporal Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, *therefore it doth*; yet this is your Inference, when you bring that word in *that Sense* against me, without any Proof for it. 'Tis a wilful Mistake of yours, by which you make me say: That in the Ancient Writings, *Feast or Day of Assumption* when apply'd to Saints did *only almost always* signifie the Day of *their Death*: It *always* bore that meaning apply'd to them, tho we sometimes find that in a different Sense it signified the Festival kept on the Day of the Coronation of Princes, or inthroning of Bishops.

'Tis a *Cheat* impos'd upon vulgar Readers to insinuate that the 25th Sermon cited by me, doth not speak of the Blessed Virgins Death, but of her *Assumption* in the Sense which that word now vulgarly bears. The Author of it Plainly expresses the contrary in Words, like to those we find in all the Writings of the ancient Fathers on this Subject. They be these: The World is honour'd by *so great a Virgins Departure, in what Order or Man-*

nor she passed hence to Heaven, the Catholic Church doth no way recount: neither is her Body found on Earth, neither is her Assumption in the Flesh, (as it is read in the Apocrypha's *found in the Catholic Church; this is the true Opinion concerning her Assumption, that not knowing whether in her Body or out of it, as the Apostle hath: We believe her assumed above the Angels.* Now what a *Contradiction* is it or a *plain Cheat*, to say that this Sermon was preached, when the Church did believe, *that the Virgin* Mary *was in the Day of that Solemnity assumed into Heaven.*

Next you make a large flourish of 30 lines and an Essay of a School-boys Rhetoric, which moves me to believe that 'tis not long since you are come from it. Your Subject is my *gross Error* in saying the 14th Sermon de Sanctis *was allowed by all*, that the *Title* of it was, *In the Feast of all Saints*, the Subject, the Praises of a Virgin and Martyr; you took great Pains to find it out as you assure us, thinking there might have been in the Citation some Errors of the Press; but in vain, and therefore you lay it to my Charge. So many particulars as were cited by me, would have sufficiently directed any one that was not resolved to mistake me, that he might fancy something to object against. There are but *two* 14th Sermons de Sanctis, that of the first ancient Collection, and that in the other Compilation of 17, made by the *Divines* of *Paris*, the 14th of these I cited, its Title is, *In the Feast of all Saints*, 'tis on a *Virgin Martyr*, and that you may mistake it no more, take the first lines of it. *We are put in mind by the Solemnity of a Sacred Virgin which bore Witness to Christ, and receiv'd it from Christ publickly put to Death, privately Crown'd*, &c. Pray, Sir, be hereafter somewhat less rash in your Rhetorical Declamations, which may do your Work in your Pulpits; but are ever unbeseeming in a Controversie Letter, when so empty of all Reason.

Your Second Objection was, That the Divines of *Lovain* tell us how *in several MSS. this Sermon was intituled Fulbertus Camotensis.*

I answered, this was no Proof in this Case; St. *Ambrose's* Sermons, St. *Peter Chrysologus's*, and others being not less unquestionably owned to be theirs, tho some antient MSS. intitled others to them. I gave several Instances of this Truth, which I conceiv'd to bear away all Force from your Objection, which is all pretended unto, being in Possession of the ancient

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and general Perſwaſion that this Sermon was St. *Auguſtins* genuine Work.

You have in your Anſwer, brought to ſupport your weak proof, *Firſt*, that I omitted to take any notice of half of it, to wit, That the *Benedictins* of *Paris* had MSS. in which this Sermon had no Authors name prefix'd. *Secondly*, you ask me whether I would prove, becauſe St. *Ambroſe* his Sermons have appear'd in ancient MSS. under other Authors Names, that therefore *this* Sermon *muſt* be St. *Auguſtin's*, tho' it bears not his Name either in the MSS. uſed by the *Lovain* Doctors, or the *Benedictins* of *Paris*. *Thirdly*, you ſay that ancient Fathers Sermons are known to be theirs, from their *Stile*, or becauſe aſſerted to them by the moſt and beſt MSS. Your *firſt* Anſwer is *ridiculous*, your *ſecond* of *no force*, and beſides evidently *falſe* and *contradictory*; the third *againſt your ſelf*.

Were it not *ridiculous*, after a *poſitive* Witneſs produced for a Plaintiff, who challenges for his, Goods found in anothers hands; when ſuch an Evidence is proved of no force, to preſent *another*, who only ſays, that *he knows not to whom ſuch Goods belong?* Were it not a pleaſant folly, to value much ſuch a Witneſs, and pretend the adverſe party muſt be *much afraid* he ſhould be heard? I pitied your weakneſs, Sir, in bringing ſuch an additional proof, and paſs it by, becauſe I love not to inſult on an erring Adverſaries patent miſtake.

But doth it follow from ſeveral Fathers Sermons appearing in MSS. under others Names, that this 35*th*. Sermon *muſt* be St. *Auguſtin's*? No, Sir; but it *evidently* follows, that it *may be*, for all the reaſon you offer to diſprove it. But with what *diſingenuity* and *real forgery* do you inſinuate (*pag.* 7.) That *this Sermon bears not his* (St. *Auguſtin's*) *Name either in the MSS. uſed by the* Lovain *Divines, or by the* Benedictins; when you own your ſelf, that the *Lovain* Divines only ſay it is not in *ſeveral* of their MSS.?

But do you not egregiouſly *deſtroy* your own Cauſe, when you appeal to *moſt* ancient MSS. and the known *Stile* of the Author? Was not that eminent Doctor of the Catholic Church, St. *Thomas* of *Aquine*, better acquainted with St. *Auguſtin's* Stile, (being call'd *Auguſtinus Contractus*) than you dare, (if yet there be any thing you dare not attempt) preſume your ſelf to be? Had he

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not as great a plenty, He and all his Contemporaries, and of fresher Manuscripts?

Your *last Instance* was, That *Isidore* being quoted in that Sermon, *'tis certain* that it was not written two hundred years after St. *Augustin*, and *probably* not till a thousand years after Christ, being *Fulbertus* his work.

I answered, That it *was evident*, the *Isidore* quoted there *could not* be him you mean, or any of that Name that lived after St. *Augustin*, and therefore must be some one of those many and illustrious *Isidores* who lived in and before his time. This I proved evidently from the following words of this very Sermon in debate. *In our time no Author amongst the Latins can be found, who treating of the Blessed Virgins Death hath been positive and expresse*; for no one could be ignorant of what so famous an Author as St. *Gregory Tur.* had in his History plainly and fully written in the sixth Age, or of that Sermon cited under the Name of St. *Hierom*, and certainly written by one who lived near the time of the fourth General Council; a Sermon cited by the famous *Hincmar* Bishop of *Rhemes* in the ninth Century. *S. Odilo*, and several others of the same Age of *Fulbertus*, or of the Book adscribed to St. *Melito*, which was piously valued by many, as *John Camotensis*, Contemporary to *Fulbertus*, acknowledges. This was a full Answer; but you must attempt to disprove it.

First, you say, That I cannot prove that any of those *Isidores* who were before St. *Augustin* were Writers. *Secondly*, that had I look't into the *Lovain* Edition of St. *Augustin*, I should have seen out of what Book of that *Isidore*, who lived in the seventh Century, the passage is taken. *Thirdly*, That my believing this Sermon to be St. *Augustin's*, because *Thomas Aquinas* (who is no less eminent a Saint for your refusing to call him so) believed it, after the Judgment of the *Lovain* Divines, and present *Benedictins* of *Paris*, is an *unbecoming obstinacy*. Your *first* Answer is *childish*, your *second* was answered in my first Letter; your *third* a proof of a most *proud rashness*, in slighting the Authority of a Doctor so eminent, that above one half of the Divines of the Christian World do own him for Master, and bind themselves to maintain all he hath taught.

After I have proved that the Sermon, in which one *Isidore* is cited, must of necessity have been made in or about St. *Augustin's* time

time; is it not a childish Answer, to pretend that I must besides prove some *Isidore* before his time was a Writer, before I can make out that it was not that *Isidore* (who lived not of two hundred years after him) that he cited in his Writings?

I have also in my Letter to the *Protestant Poor* shewed that the Citation of *Isidore* could not be made out to be taken out of the Book cited by the *Lovain* Doctors, the doubt there proposed being obvious, having been made before St. *Augustin*'s time, by St. *Epiphanius*, *&c.*

But pray, Sir, by what Equivocation will you excuse him who shall say, *No body writ of such a subject positively*, only meaning that what was written *was not true*? yet thus you make the holy Bishop *Fulbertus* to speak. I never said (as you intimate) that St. *Bernard* disbelieved the blessed Virgins Assumption, his *Epistle* 174. shews he piously believed it, tho' not as certain. Let me add, That if you will but read the Sermon in debate, and *Fulbertus* his second Sermon of the Nativity of the B. Virgin, you will be forced to own the same could not be Author of both; the *One* assuring us, that the Church taught nothing of the Corporal Assumption of the Virgin; the *Other* teaches, that *Christian Piety* (all pious Christians) *believed that Christ raised gloriously his Mother, and placed her above the Heavens*; and that even St. *John* Baptist did partake of her Glory.

As for the 18*th*. Sermon *de Sanctis*, which I said was owned by the *Lovain* Divines, let me tell you, that you impose upon less-thinking Readers, when you represent *that* my assertion as *false*. *Natalis Alexandre*, one of the latest Critics, acknowledges they own it, and on that score cites it. But your proof, I confess, forced a smile from me; 'tis that they put this Note before it, *Some attribute this Sermon to Fulgentius*. Your Inference hath as little of common sense, as this following one would have of force against me; *that I own some have attributed the* 351*th*. *Sermon* de Sanctis *to* Fulbertus, *therefore I do not believe it to be St.* Augustin's. This Inference is to me a piece of very new, and very rare Logic.

Here, Sir, I part with you, hoping I have satisfied all reasonable men that I had ground enough to cite this 351*th*. Sermon of St. *Augustin*'s, without *ignorance* or *forgery*, and that my charge against you, *That the Church of England is condemned by your own words, as guilty of Schism, for separating from the Church of Rome*

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on that account of the Invocation of Saints, which was taught by St. Austin, and all the Fathers of his Age, and the precedent Century, is evidently made out beyond the probability of a forming Answer, or it would have had it, from One who hath *Time* and *Confidence* enough to nibble at a short Prayer set in the entrance of a Sermon, tho' not on design to clear any point there debated; and to accuse me of *Forgery* and *Disingenuity*, without any proof in hand to make good so heavy a charge, and to justifie his most insolent boasting. I am sorry, Sir, that you force from me harsher words than I would ever use, except in the defence of Truth, which you unavoidably put me upon, who nevertheless shall ever so far distinguish betwixt *the Man* and *his Errors*, as to be equally a constant Enemy to *These*, and,

SIR,

Your true Friend and Servant,

LEWIS SABRAN, *of the Society of Jesus.*

LONDON:

Printed by *Henry Hills*, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty for his Houshold and Chappel; And are to be sold at his Printing-house on the Dock side in *Black-Fryars*. 1687.